The Rich Man and Lazarus: A Study Guide for Further Reading

Introduction

This guide gathers academic sources, historical background, and additional reading materials on the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), organized by topic, for those who wish to explore this fascinating parable in greater depth.

1. The Biblical Text

Primary Source:
Luke 16:19-31, in any standard translation (King James Version, New International Version, English Standard Version, New Revised Standard Version).

Free online access:
Bible Gateway: www.biblegateway.com
Blue Letter Bible (includes Greek word study tools): www.blueletterbible.org
Bible Hub (includes interlinear Greek text): www.biblehub.com

For readers interested in the original Greek text, both Blue Letter Bible and Bible Hub allow you to click on individual words to see the original Greek term, its transliteration, and its range of meanings, which is especially useful for studying the name Lazarus (Greek: Lazaros, from the Hebrew Eleazar).

2. On the Parables of Jesus in General

Jeremias, Joachim. The Parables of Jesus. Revised edition. New York: Scribner, 1972.
A foundational twentieth-century work on the historical and cultural context of Jesus's parables. Jeremias devotes significant attention to the Rich Man and Lazarus, situating it within Jewish literary traditions of the period. Widely available in university libraries and used bookstores.

Bailey, Kenneth E. Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.

Bailey, Kenneth E. Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes (combined edition). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983.
Bailey's work focuses on Middle Eastern cultural context, drawing on his decades of living and

teaching in the Middle East. His analysis of social customs, including begging at gates, is frequently cited in discussions of this parable.

Snodgrass, Klyne. Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
A more recent and comprehensive scholarly treatment of all the parables, including a detailed chapter on the Rich Man and Lazarus with extensive bibliography.

3. Academic Articles on This Specific Parable

Bauckham, Richard. The Rich Man and Lazarus: The Parable and the Parallels. New Testament Studies 37, no. 2 (1991): 225-246.
This article explores parallels between the parable and other ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian folk tales involving reversal of fortune after death. Available through academic databases such as JSTOR (jstor.org) or Cambridge Core (cambridge.org), often accessible through university library subscriptions.

For readers without academic database access, searching the article title on Google Scholar (scholar.google.com) sometimes surfaces free PDF versions hosted by academic institutions.

4. On Jewish Beliefs About the Afterlife (Sheol, Hades, and the Bosom of Abraham)

The Book of Enoch (1 Enoch), particularly chapters 22-27, which describe compartments in the realm of the dead for the righteous and the wicked.

Free public domain translation (R.H. Charles translation, 1917) available at:
Sacred Texts Archive: www.sacred-texts.com/bib/boe
The Internet Sacred Text Archive also hosts this and other Second Temple period Jewish texts freely.

Nickelsburg, George W. E. 1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1-36; 81-108. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001.
A rigorous academic commentary for readers wanting deeper analysis of Enochic literature and its relationship to Second Temple Jewish cosmology.

Bauckham, Richard. The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses. Leiden: Brill, 1998.
Explores in detail how Jewish apocalyptic literature envisioned the afterlife, directly relevant to understanding the bosom of Abraham imagery.

5. On First-Century Judean Archaeology and Daily Life

Meyers, Eric M., and Mark A. Chancey. Alexander to Constantine: Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, Volume 3. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.
A scholarly overview of archaeological findings in the region, including discussion of Sepphoris and Capernaum.

Evans, Craig A. Jesus and His World: The Archaeological Evidence. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012.
Accessible to general readers, this book connects archaeological discoveries directly to episodes and parables in the Gospels.

Reed, Jonathan L. Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus: A Re-examination of the Evidence. Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000.
Focuses specifically on Galilean archaeology and social structure during the time of Jesus.

Free online resource:
The Biblical Archaeology Society maintains a large free article archive at www.biblicalarchaeology.org, with numerous articles on excavations at Sepphoris, Capernaum, and other first-century Judean and Galilean sites.

6. On the Purple Dye Industry in Antiquity

Ziderman, I. Irving. Seashells and Ancient Purple Dyeing. Biblical Archaeologist 53, no. 2 (1990): 98-101.
A concise academic article on the murex dye industry and its economic significance in antiquity.

Free online resource:
Search Tyrian purple murex archaeology on the Biblical Archaeology Society website (biblicalarchaeology.org) for several free articles on this topic, including estimates of the number of mollusks required to produce dye and its historical cost.

7. On Lazarus of Bethany and Possible Connections

John 11:1-44 (the raising of Lazarus of Bethany) and John 12:9-11 (the plot against him afterward), available through the same Bible reading resources listed in section 1.

For a scholarly discussion of the relationship, or lack thereof, between the two Lazarus figures, see the relevant sections in Snodgrass's Stories with Intent (cited above), which addresses this question directly with citations to the broader academic debate.

8. Suggested Order for Further Study

For readers new to this topic, we suggest the following approach:

Begin by reading Luke 16:19-31 in two or three different translations side by side using Bible Gateway. Then read the corresponding chapter in either Bailey's or Jeremias's book for cultural and literary context. Follow this with the free Book of Enoch chapters 22-27 to understand the Jewish afterlife framework Jesus was likely drawing upon. Finally, explore the Biblical Archaeology Society's free articles on Sepphoris, Capernaum, and Tyrian purple to ground the parable in its physical historical setting.

A Note on This Guide

This document was compiled to support independent, deeper study of the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. All sources listed are legitimate academic and publicly accessible materials. Where possible, we have prioritized free online resources alongside standard academic publications available through libraries. Readers are encouraged to consult these sources directly for a fuller and more nuanced understanding of this rich and complex parable.